



ST. CHARLES
SINCE 1834

AGENDA ITEM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: General Amendment (City of St. Charles)
Half-Story Definition

Presenter: Russell Colby

Please check appropriate box:

	Government Operations		Government Services
X	Planning & Development – 5/9/11		City Council
	Public Hearing		

Estimated Cost:	NA	Budgeted:	YES		NO	
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If NO, please explain how item will be funded:

Executive Summary:

Staff is proposing a change to the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance that apply to the Traditional Residential Districts (the older residential neighborhoods surrounding downtown). The proposed change would correct a flaw in the definition of a “Half-story”, which is used to distinguish a one-and-one-half-story house from a two-story house.

The definition of a “Half-story” is part of a set of requirements that limit the maximum size of a house that can be built on a lot. The distinction of a 1.5 vs. 2 story house is used to establish “Building Coverage” (the percentage of a lot covered by the footprint of a building or roofed-over structure, not including square footage in a 2nd floor or basement).

- For a 1 or 1.5 story house, Building Coverage = 30% of the lot area
- For a 2 story house, Building Coverage = 25% of the lot area

The proposed definition is based on input from the Plan Commission. The definition is more practical and easier to apply to a building than the existing definition. The definition eliminates a restriction of finished space within the half-story level and adds an allowance for window dormers (across 50% of the roof). The proposed definition will not have a negative impact on the character of existing older neighborhoods.

Review of the “Half-Story” definition prompted a discussion with Architect Dan Marshall and the Plan Commission regarding whether the Building Coverage percentages for older neighborhoods are too restrictive. The Plan Commission suggested to staff that the City consider revisiting the Building Coverage standards. Because an increase in Building Coverage for older neighborhoods would be a significant policy change, Staff is seeking policy direction from the Committee on this issue.

Attachments: *(please list)*

Staff Report and Attachments, Letter from Dan Marshall to Plan Comm., Plan Comm. Resolution, Application

Recommendation / Suggested Action *(briefly explain):*

Staff recommends approval of the General Amendment as presented.
Also, Staff is seeking feedback from the Committee on whether to revisit the “Building Coverage” standard.

<i>For office use only:</i>	<i>Agenda Item Number:</i>
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Community Development
 Planning Division

Phone: (630) 377-4443

Fax: (630) 377-4062



STAFF MEMO

TO: Chairman Cliff Carrigan
 and Planning and Development Committee Members

FROM: Russell Colby, Planner

RE: General Amendment to Title 17 (Zoning Ordinance)
 Definition of a “Half Story” for a Residential house

DATE: May 5, 2011

BACKGROUND

Staff has proposed a change to the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance that apply to the Traditional Residential Districts (the older residential neighborhoods surrounding downtown). The change would modify the definition of a “Half Story” for a residential home. The definition is used to distinguish between a Two (2) story and a One-and-one-half (1.5) story house.

The distinction of a 2 vs. 1.5 story house is used to establish “Building Coverage” for a lot. “Building Coverage” regulates the maximum size of a house that can be built on a lot. “Building Coverage” is calculated as a percentage of a lot covered by buildings or roofed-over structures.

- For a 1 or 1.5 story house, Building Coverage = 30% of the lot area
- For a 2 story house, Building Coverage = 25% of the lot area

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Size	Maximum allowed 2-story “Building Coverage” (or building footprint) at 25% of lot area	Maximum allowed 1.5 story “Building Coverage” (or building footprint) at 30% of lot area	Building Coverage Bonuses allowed
RT-1	8,400 square feet	2,100 sf	2,250 sf	Detached garage; unenclosed front porch
RT-2	6,600 square feet	1,650 sf	1,980 sf	
RT-3 & RT-4	5,000 square feet	1,250 sf	1,500 sf	

Note: “Building Coverage” is the first floor square footage, and does not include square footage in a 2nd floor or basement

“Building Coverage” regulation was created in 2006, when the City overhauled and re-wrote the entire Zoning Ordinance. Standards and requirements for the entire City were changed at that time. “Building Coverage” replaced an older system for regulating building size that was thought to be ineffective at controlling the size of a building relative to the size of a building lot.

One of the goals of the 2006 Zoning Ordinance overhaul was to control the size of new or “teardown” replacement houses in the older neighborhoods. In the early 2000s, questions were raised as to why new houses could be constructed in older neighborhoods at a much larger size or footprint than the existing older homes in the neighborhood. As a result, after considerable research, “Building Coverage” percentages based on surveys of existing homes were proposed by the Zoning Commission and adopted by the City Council with in the new ordinance in 2006.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Architect Dan Marshall approached Staff regarding an interpretation of the City’s definition of “Half-story” as it applies to a project he is working on at 622 S. 4th Street, in the RT-3 Zoning District. Mr. Marshall’s client, Frank Lauria, owner of the property, would like to renovate and expand the house. The “Building Coverage” of the proposed house is 30%, which is allowed for a 1.5 story house, but exceeds the limit for a 2-story house.

In researching Mr. Marshall’s request for an interpretation, Staff determined that the existing definition of a “Half-Story” was flawed, in the following ways:

- The definition limits the “finished area” within the half-story, which is unrelated to the overall size of the house when viewed from the outside
- The definition does not allow for any window dormers or other architectural features projecting out of a roof surface. These features are common in a 1.5-story house.

Mr. Marshall stated a concern with the Building Coverage percentage of 25% for a 2-story house. He has expressed that the percentage is too restrictive for a small lot and that the limitation on Building Coverage will prevent owners from rehabilitating and reinvesting in older houses. He recommended to Staff that the Building Coverage percentage be raised to 30% for all houses, regardless of the number of stories.

Staff responded that the Building Coverage standards were set based on research of existing neighborhoods, and adjusting this percentage upward would be a significant policy change to the ordinance.

Because the “Half-Story” definition itself was found to be flawed, Staff offered to assist with or propose a General Amendment to revise the definition as it applies to all homes in the RT neighborhoods.

PLAN COMMISSION REVIEW

At a public hearing on 4/19/11, staff solicited feedback from the Plan Commission on how to define a 1.5 story house. The Plan Commission commented on pictures of buildings that could be considered “1.5 story” and offered comments on what elements of the architecture made a house appear 1.5 vs. 2-story.

At a continued hearing on 5/3/11, staff presented a revised definition based on the Plan Commission’s feedback. The proposed definition includes the following:

- “Half-story” walls cannot extend more than 3 ft. above the half-story floor level before meeting the roof (same as current definition)
- Interior finished area of the Half-Story will not be regulated. (No limit on the amount of living space created within the half-story)
- Window dormers or other projections out of the roof surface will be allowed, at no more than 50% of the length of the roof surface.

The Plan Commission recommended approval of the definition proposed by Staff.

Mr. Dan Marshall had an opportunity to offer comments to the Plan Commission. Based on Mr. Marshall's comments, the Plan Commission also suggested to Staff that the City consider revisiting the Building Coverage standards that were established in 2006. However, the Plan Commission did not state a position that it should be increased. Staff indicated that the suggestion would be taken under advisement, and that it would be appropriate to solicit policy direction from City Council Committee before such an amendment would be initiated.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff believes that the proposed definition of "Half Story" is practical and easier to apply to a building than the existing definition, and is recommending approval as proposed. The proposed definition will not have a negative impact on the character of existing older neighborhoods.

However, if the Committee wishes to make the definition more lenient, the percentage of dormers allowed in a roof could be increased above 50%. (For example, a percentage of dormer standard of 65-75% would allow almost all Bungalow or Cape Cod-style houses to be considered 1.5 story, not 2 story). Alternately, the maximum wall height allowed in the Half-story could be increased from 3 to 4 or 5 feet.

If the Committee directs staff to re-assess the Building Coverage standards established in 2006, then Staff would suggest the Committee consider tabling this item. Re-assessing the Building Coverage standard will take considerable research and analysis, as the requirements are established across multiple zoning districts.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Amendment Text
2. Findings of Fact recommending approval
3. Diagrams of Proposed "Half-Story" definition
4. Sample of 1.5 story houses reviewed by the Plan Commission

AMENDMENT TEXT
(REVISED 5/3/11)

Existing Ordinance Text- Zoning Ordinance Definitions, City Code Chapter 17.30

Basement. A portion of a building located partly underground, where four (4) feet or more of its clear floor-to-ceiling height is above the average grade of the adjoining ground.

Story. That portion of a building included between the surface of a floor and the surface of the floor next above, or if there is no floor above, the space between the floor and the ceiling or roof above it. A basement shall be counted as a story for the purposes of this Title; a cellar shall not be counted as a story, but shall be included in any calculation of gross floor area if it otherwise meets the applicable criteria.

Story, Half. A space under a sloping roof which has the line of intersection of roof decking and wall not more than three (3) feet above the top floor level and, in which space, not more than sixty percent (60%) of the floor area is completed for principal or accessory use.

Proposed Changes

Basement. (Unchanged)

Story. (Unchanged)

Story, Half: A partial story located above a full story and underneath a sloping roof, where the roof planes intersect two opposite exterior walls at a height of no more than 3 ft. above the half-story floor level, and window dormers or other projections out from this roof plane do not exceed more than 50% of the horizontal length of the roof, measured along both opposite roof planes at 3 ft. above the half-story floor level or higher.

FINDINGS OF FACT
GENERAL AMENDMENT

1. The consistency of the proposed amendment with the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

Not applicable. The Comprehensive Plan does not directly address establishment of height/bulk regulations for residential districts.

2. The consistency of the proposed amendment with the intent and general regulations of this Title.

The amendment is consistent with the existing Zoning Ordinance standard for one and one-half story houses and will allow additional flexibility for projections, such as window or shed dormers. The definition will allow for house forms that are consistent with the existing neighborhoods and allow for a greater variety of architectural styles, which is an important characteristic of the RT districts.

3. Whether the proposed amendment corrects an error or omission, adds clarification to existing requirements, is more workable than the existing text, or reflects a change in policy.

The proposed changes will create a more workable regulation for one and one-half story houses. The existing regulation is restrictive and would not permit what is commonly considered to be a one and one-half story house. Additionally, the existing definition for half-story regulated the interior finished area, which has no direct relation to outside visual mass. The new definition will regulate only the exterior mass.

4. The extent to which the proposed amendment would be in the public interest and would not serve solely the interest of the applicant.

The amendment has been proposed by the City and is in the public interest.

5. The extent to which the proposed amendment creates nonconformities.

The amendment will not create nonconformities but rather may eliminate existing nonconformities.

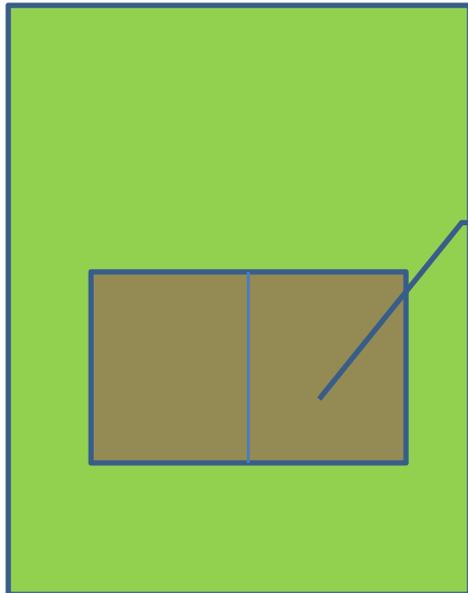
6. The implications of the proposed amendment on all similarly zoned property in the City.

The amendment will be applied equally to all residential zoning districts.

1.5 Story House



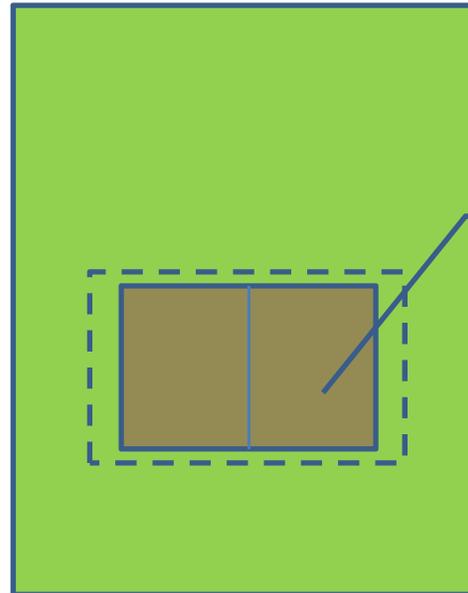
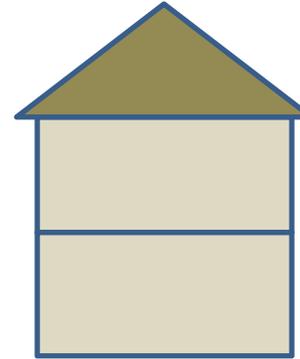
Front View
Of House



Overhead
View of Lot

30%
Building
Coverage

2 Story House



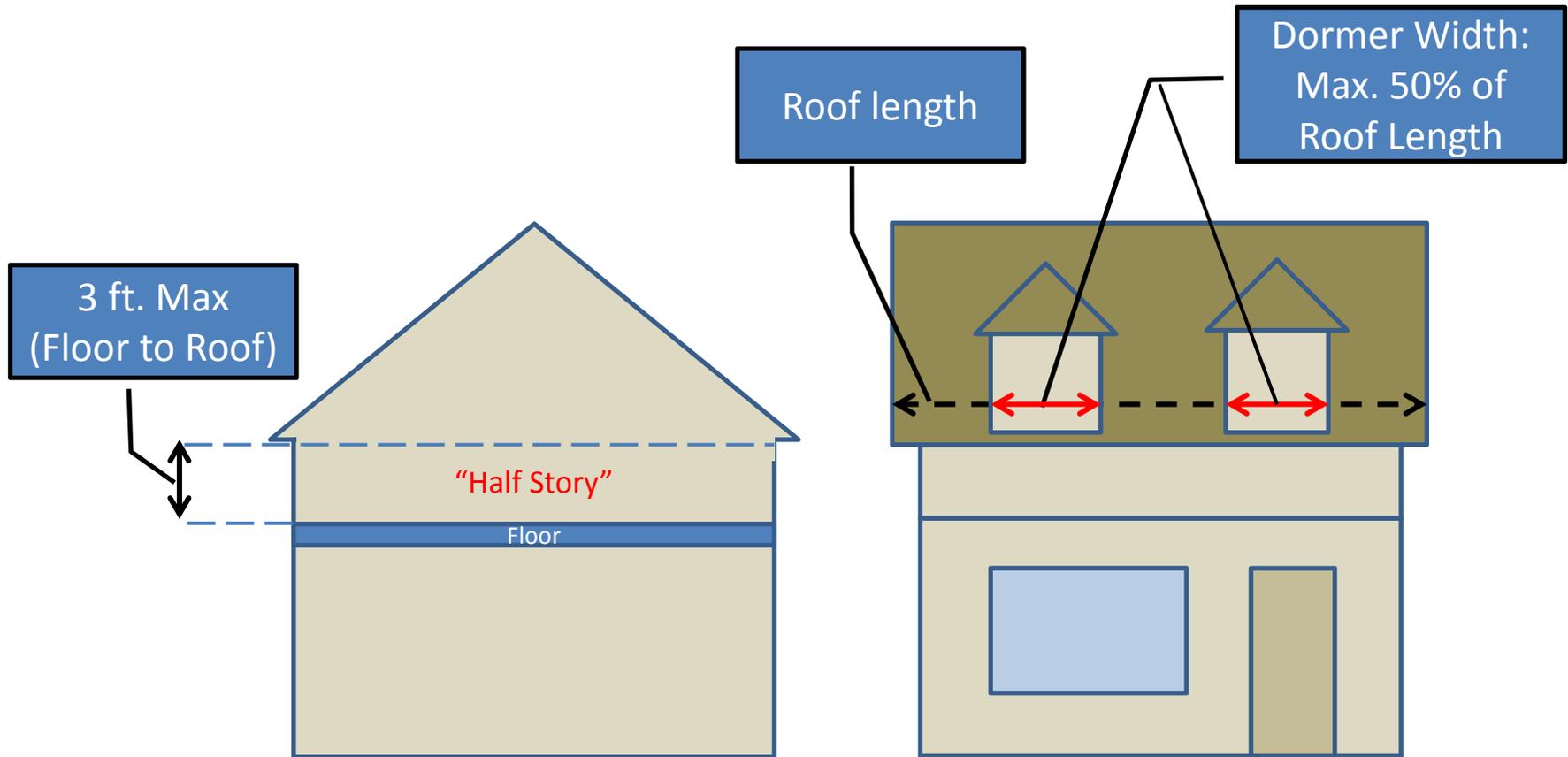
25%
Building
Coverage

Street



1.5 Story House
Side View
Cross-Section

1.5 Story House
Front View



Half-Story Houses: Do not exceed 50% dormer width



Cape Cod style house: 65-75% dormer projection (considered 2-story)



Bungalow style house: 50-75% projection (Over 50% is considered 2-story)



Newer construction: 65-75% dormer projection (2-story)





"Dan Marshall"
<dan@marshallarchitects.com>
04/19/2011 03:37 PM

To "Russell Colby" <rcolby@stcharlesil.gov>
cc <frank@onedgedesign.net>
bcc
Subject 1.5 story definition

To Members of the Plan Commission,

After working on a remodeling project in St. Charles it became evident that we need to clarify current definition of a 1.5 Story house. It seems to me that the intention of the zoning code is to reduce the massing of the house compared to a full 2 story house to allow an increase in the LCR.

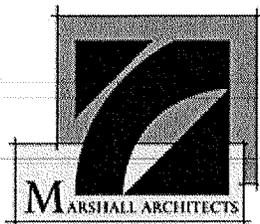
I feel that a simple definition is best. The definition should allow for as much flexibility as possible. This allows for variety in the design which is a quality that makes older neighborhoods interesting. The definition should also allow for various types and sizes of dormers as well as some areas with higher eaves.

I do not think that the definition should include any percentage of finished area in the attic compared to the first floor since this does not affect the massing of the house. An owner should be able to finish as much space in the attic as they desire since this does not change the massing. I think the definition really only needs to include a maximum ridge height (which can be the same as a full 2 story) and a certain percentage of the eave line at a certain maximum height above the 1st floor (excluding dormers).

I have attached a copy of a drawing of a house renovation / addition we recently designed that I believe is a good example of a 1.5 story massing. It is very similar to the massing of the attached photo.

It is very difficult to make it feasible to renovate an older house. If we want to keep our housing stock occupied with owner occupied families then it would be beneficial to allow more finished square footage. Older neighborhoods were developed prior zoning codes and now these are the neighborhood we like the most. Zoning constraints actually work against the sensibility that we most desire in older neighborhoods by creating uniform standards. While I understand the need for limits, allowing for an increase in the finished square footage would act as an incentive for families to renovate their houses instead of building new homes outside of town. This is beneficial to our community in many ways. It is for this reason that I encourage the adoption of a definition of 1.5 story that allows an owner to finish nearly the same amount of square footage as a full 2 story house with some low eaves to break down the massing and reduce the scale.

Thanks for your consideration.



Dan Marshall
Principal
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cell: (630) 542-0406
fax: (630) 584-7862



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WEST ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



SOUTH ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



EAST ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



NORTH ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



PROPOSED ADDITION AT:
622 S. 4th STREET
 ST. CHARLES, LA
 ON EDGE DESIGN + CONSTRUCTION

PLotted 8/2/2011

Revision	Date

Commission: 284
 Issue Date:
 Drawn By: PLG
 ELEVATIONS

Sheet:
 of: 1
 OFFICE

3-3-2011



City of St. Charles, Illinois
Plan Commission Resolution No. 7-2011

**A Resolution Recommending Approval of a General Amendment
To Title 17 Zoning, Chapter 17.30 Definitions pertaining to definition of a “Half-Story”**

Passed by Plan Commission May 3, 2011

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the St. Charles Plan Commission to hold public hearings and review requests for amendments to Title 17, “Zoning”; and

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission held a public hearing and has reviewed the petition for a General Amendment to Title 17, “Zoning”, Chapter 17.30 Definitions pertaining to the definition of a “Half-Story”; and

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission finds approval of said amendment to be in the best interest of the City of St. Charles based upon the following findings of fact:

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The consistency of the proposed amendment with the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

Not applicable. The Comprehensive Plan does not directly address establishment of height/bulk regulations for residential districts.

2. The consistency of the proposed amendment with the intent and general regulations of this Title.

The amendment is consistent with the existing Zoning Ordinance standard for one and one-half story houses and will allow additional flexibility for projections, such as window or shed dormers. The definition will allow for house forms that are consistent with the existing neighborhoods and allow for a variety of architectural styles, which is an important characteristic of the RT districts.

3. Whether the proposed amendment corrects an error or omission, adds clarification to existing requirements, is more workable than the existing text, or reflects a change in policy.

The proposed changes will create a more workable regulation for one and one-half story houses. The existing regulation is restrictive and would not permit what is commonly considered to be a one and one-half story house. Additionally, the

Resolution 7-2011

existing definition for half-story regulated the interior finished area, which has no direct relation to outside visual mass. The new definition will regulate only the exterior mass.

4. The extent to which the proposed amendment would be in the public interest and would not serve solely the interest of the applicant.

The amendment has been proposed by the City and is in the public interest.

5. The extent to which the proposed amendment creates nonconformities.

The amendment will not create nonconformities but rather may eliminate existing nonconformities.

6. The implications of the proposed amendment on all similarly zoned property in the City.

The amendment will be applied equally to all residential zoning districts.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the St. Charles Plan Commission to recommend to City Council approval of the General Amendment to Title 17, "Zoning" Chapter 17.30 Definitions pertaining to the definition of "Half-Story" based upon the above Findings of Fact and all staff comments being addressed prior to final City Council action.

Voice Vote:

Ayes: Kessler, Doyle, Amatangelo, Pretz, Henningson

Nays: None

Absent: Wallace, Schuetz

Motion Carried.

PASSED, this 3rd day of May 2011.

Chairman
St. Charles Plan Commission

Secretary
St. Charles Plan Commission

CITY OF ST. CHARLES

TWO EAST MAIN STREET
ST. CHARLES, ILLINOIS 60174-1984



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING DIVISION

PHONE: (630) 377-4443 FAX: (630) 377-4062

GENERAL AMENDMENT APPLICATION

CITYVIEW	
Project Name:	_____
Project Number:	<u>2011</u> -PR- <u>003</u>
Application Number:	<u>2011</u> -AP- <u>008</u>

Received Date

RECEIVED

St. Charles, IL

APR 1 - 2011

CDD

Planning Division

Instructions:

To request an amendment to the text of the St. Charles Zoning Ordinance, complete this application and submit it with all required attachments to the Planning Division.

City staff will review submittals for completeness and for compliance with applicable requirements prior to establishing a meeting or public hearing date for an application.

The information you provide must be complete and accurate. If you have a question please call the Planning Division and we will be happy to assist you.

1. Applicant:	Name	Phone
	Address	Fax
		Email
2. Billing: <i>Who is responsible for paying application fees and reimbursements?</i>	Name	Phone
	Address	Fax
		Email

Handwritten entries:
 1. Applicant: Name: City of St. Charles; Phone: 630-377-4443; Address: 2 E. Main St., St. Charles, IL 60174; Email: rcolby@stcharlesil.gov
 2. Billing: Address: Same

Attachment Checklist

- APPLICATION:** Completed application form
- APPLICATION FEE:** Application fee in accordance with Appendix B of the Zoning Ordinance.
- REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES AGREEMENT:** An original, executed Reimbursement of Fees Agreement and deposit of funds in escrow with the City, as provided by Appendix B of the Zoning Ordinance.
- WORDING OF THE REQUESTED TEXT AMENDMENT**
One (1) copy of Proposed Amendment (Letter Sized) and one (1) Electronic Microsoft Word version on CD-ROM

Requested Text Amendment

To amend Section(s) (See below) of the St. Charles Zoning Ordinance. The wording of the proposed amendment is: (attach sheets if necessary)

17.12 Residential Districts, pertaining to bulk requirements
for one and one-half story buildings

17.30 Definitions, pertaining to definitions for "story"
and "half story"

I (we) certify that this application and the documents submitted with it are true and correct to the best of my (our) knowledge and belief.

Russell Gay

Applicant

4/1/11

Date